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Introduction

The *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* offers a survey of academic theology in the Reformed church shortly after its codification at the international Synod of Dort (1618–1619), occasioned by the clash with the Remonstrants in the Dutch Republic.¹ The summary of Reformed Orthodox theology originated from a series of disputations written by four Leiden professors of theology and publically defended by their students. The editors of this new bilingual edition have divided the 52 disputations into three parts, including the disputations 1–23 in the first, the disputations 23–42 in the second, and the disputations 43–52 in the third volume.

The disputations collected in the first volume laid the scriptural foundation of theology and discussed the doctrine of the Triune God, the creation of the world and humanity, sin, and finally the way in which God addresses human beings in Law and Gospel. The nineteen disputations in this second volume deal with different aspects of the doctrines of salvation: predestination (disputation 24), the person and work of Christ (25–29), the effectuation of salvation by God's calling and the human response in faith and repentance (30–32), justification and sanctification (33–38), a polemical disputation on purgatory (39), and ecclesiology (40–42). The final volume will contain ten more disputations on the sacraments, church discipline and church councils, the civil government, and eschatology.

This introduction first discusses the structure of the *Synopsis*, then summarizes the content of the present volume, highlighting a few important aspects of Reformed soteriology from the details of the disputations, reflects on the sources of the disputations and the differences in style between the four authors, and finally offers some information on the repetitions of the disputation cycle represented in the *Synopsis*.

1 The Structure of the *Synopsis*

It is not certain if publication of the cycle as a textbook was already contemplated when the cycle started in February 1620, but the structure of the *Synopsis* was agreed upon beforehand

¹ For a short introduction to the historical background of the *Synopsis* see Dolf te Velde, "Introduction," in Dolf te Velde (ed.), *Synopsis purioris theologiae = Synopsis of a Purer Theology*, volume 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1–22. For more details on historical aspects see Donald Sinnema and Henk van den Belt, "The *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (1625) as a Disputation Cycle," *Church History and Religious Culture* 92.4 (2012): 505–537. The final volume of the *Synopsis* series will include an extensive historical and theological introduction to the whole work.

by Johannes Polyander (1568–1646), Antonius Walaeus (1573–1639), and Antonius Thysius (1565–1640). Andreas Rivetus (1572–1651), who joined the staff only in the fall of 1620, was not involved in planning the cycle.

The *Synopsis* cycle continues a tradition of cycles of theological disputations that began in 1596. A comparison with the six cycles of disputations held prior to the Synod of Dort reveals some remarkable choices of the authors of the *Synopsis*.² The first cycle was followed by five repetitions (*repetitiones*) in which the number of disputations and the topics differ. The last repetition ended abruptly in 1609 with the death of Arminius.

After more than ten years—and after the Synod of Dort—Polyander and his colleagues decided to start a new series of disputations to replace the original cycle and its repetitions. A comparison of the structure of this new cycle and previous ones reveals that the most remarkable change with respect to soteriology is the place of predestination in the series.

In the original cycle, initiated by Franciscus Junius (1545–1602), the disputation on predestination was connected to the one on providence, immediately following the Trinity and Christology. In the first repetition, both Christology and predestination move back and predestination ends up in the last part of soteriology only followed by the calling and eschatology. In the second repetition however predestination moves forward again and is again joined with providence. In the third to the fifth repetitions, however, it moves back to soteriology again.

The authors of the *Synopsis* make a new choice. They do not connect predestination with the doctrine of God or with providence, but they do not place it together with the calling at the end of soteriology either. The place of predestination in the manner of presentation (*ordo docendi*) of a theological system as such does not determine the content of the doctrine, as the participation of both Arminius and Gomarus in previous cycles illustrates.³

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The *Synopsis* places predestination at the beginning of soteriology, or, as Thysius says, between the disputation “On the Gospel” and the disputations on “the object of the Gospel and the basis for the new covenant, namely, the person of Christ, or the incarnation of the Son of God, and the personal union of the two natures of Christ” (*spt* 25.1).

² For a more extensive discussion of this issue and the lists of the six cycles prior to the *Synopsis*, including the lists of the titles in the cycles see Henk van den Belt, “Developments in Structuring of Reformed Theology: The *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (1625) as Example,” in *Reformation und Rationalität*, eds. Herman Selderhuis and Ernst-Joachim Waschke (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 289–312.

³ On this issue with regards to John Calvin’s *Institutes* see Richard A. Muller, “Establishing

2 Reformed Soteriology

Reformed soteriology expressed in these disputations should be understood within the framework of the theological context of the whole *Synopsis*. The doctrine of grace can be seen as the heart of Reformed theology, but it is not the whole body. Thus, for instance, Christology (disputations 25–29) is connected to the doctrine of God (disputations 7–9), the concept of faith and repentance (disputations 31–32) presupposes what has been said on the creation of human beings in the image of God, on sin and free will (disputations 13–17), and, above all, Reformed soteriology is pilgrim-theology based on God's revelation in Scripture (disputations 1–5).

2.1 Predestination

The disputation on predestination (24) opens with the statement that although the doctrine is difficult, the church should not remain silent about it, because the Bible speaks about it and because it is a comforting doctrine. Walaeus acknowledges that the word 'predestination' can be taken in a more general sense for divine providence or more specifically as a reference to the "ordination of persons for a specific supernatural goal" (*spt* 24.5). Though in that sense Scripture reserves 'predestination' exclusively for election, it can refer to both reprobation and election, if both categories are treated dissimilarly.

Following Jacobus Arminius, the Remonstrants understood election as the eternal decree of God to save believers, making salvation depend on foreseen faith. They explicitly rejected the supralapsarian view of Reformed theologians like Theodore Beza (1519–1605), Calvin's successor in Geneva, William Perkins (1558–1602), and Franciscus Gomarus, who placed predestination before or

the Ordo docendi: The Organization of Calvin's Institutes, 1536–1559," in: Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 118–139 and Richard A. Muller, "The Placement of Predestination in Reformed Theology: Issue or Non-Issue?" *ctj* 40 (2005): 184–210.

above (*supra*) the fall in the logical order of God's eternal decree. According to the Synod of Dort, however, the Arminians misrepresented the supralapsarian view, turning predestination into a caricature and offered a solution that contradicted the free grace of God, expressed in Scripture and accepted as orthodox in the catholic Church from Augustine onward.

Synod of Dort

The Synod of Dort expressed the doctrine of predestination in an infralapsarian way. The *Canons of Dort* open with the acknowledgment that all human beings are sinners and

deserve to be rejected by God, turning immediately to the love of God manifested in the Gospel (*Canons of Dort* i, 1–3).

The infralapsarians place predestination after or below (*infra*) the fall in the logical order of God's decree. They differ from the supralapsarians with respect to the "object of predestination" and give different answers to the question who were predestinated. Did God simply predestinate human beings, or did He predestinate them while considering the fall? According to the supralapsarians, the object of predestination consisted of possible human beings, irrespective of sin. According to the infralapsarians the object of predestination consisted of fallen human beings, who were either chosen by God or left behind in their fallen state.

At the synod, Walaeus had joined his future colleagues Polyander and Thysius in defending infralapsarianism against Gomarus, the major proponent of the supralapsarian position at the synod. Gomarus agreed with them on the issue of election, except for the precise object of predestination.⁴ The synod did not reject the supralapsarian view, but preferred the infralapsarian view as more certain and more in agreement with the Word of God.⁵⁶

In the *Synopsis* Walaeus takes the infralapsarian perspective: "Holy Scripture always passes from election to redemption or calling but never from election to creation in the image of God or to the fall and permission and ordering of sin, as those who 'ascend higher' are forced to state" (*spt* 24.22). Those who ascend higher are the supralapsarians.

5

Walaeus defines election as "the eternal and immutable decree of God whereby He chooses from the whole human race that had fallen by its own fault from pristine integrity into sin and destruction a specific number of individual people (neither better nor more worthy than others) solely out of his own good pleasure, unto salvation in Christ Jesus" (*spt* 24.14). The phrasing closely follows the definition of election of the *Canons of Dort*, i, 7, without exactly copying it.

Remonstrants

⁴ Donald Sinnema, Christian Moser, and Herman J. Selderhuis (ed.), *Acta of the Synod of Dordt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 1134.

⁵ Antonius Walaeus, *Opera omnia* (Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, 1643), 1:327a; cf. Gisbertus Voetius, *Selectae disputationes*, vol. 5 (Utrecht: Antonius Smytegelt, 1669), 602–607, Andreas J. Beck, *Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676): Sein Theologieverständnis und seine Gotteslehre*. Forschungen zur Theologie- und Dogmengeschichte, 98 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,

⁶), 101.

Referring to the Remonstrants, Walaeus says that some “who want to be members of the Reformed church” hold that God elected only those people whose faith and perseverance He had foreseen (*spt* 24.34). This view would be acceptable if they would acknowledge that faith and perseverance are gifts of God, granted on the basis of grace to those who are to be saved (*spt* 24.35). The Remonstrants, however, ascribed faith and perseverance partly to God and partly to human free will and this position, according to Walaeus, did not differ from the Pelagianism that the Church had rejected as heretical.

To explain that election and reprobation are dissimilar, Walaeus uses the scholastic distinction between negative and affirmative reprobation. In the former God is not active in the strict sense of the word; negative stands for “without a positive act of the will.” Reprobation does not mean that God has decided to have no mercy on some people, but that He has refrained from deciding to have mercy on them (*spt* 24.50). Affirmative reprobation is a ‘positive’ act of God’s will, namely his decree to punish sinners. The *Synopsis*, which offers an academic theological reflection on the decisions of the synod, defined reprobation both as the decree of God to leave some sinners in their self-chosen misery and as the decree to punish them on account of their unbelief and other sins (*Canons of Dort*, i, 15).

Although the academic disputations in general do not deal with the more pastoral aspects of the faith, Walaeus stresses that the doctrine of election teaches humility, is a basis of trust, a source of joy and hope, and a ground for consolation. These advantages only have a full impact if the believers have assurance of their election, based on its effects, “which pious people discover in themselves with joy, following serious self-examination” (*spt* 24.42).

2.2 *Christology*

The *Synopsis* discusses Christology in an important cluster of disputations not only covering the incarnation and the doctrine of Christ’s two Natures (25), but also the threefold office of Christ (26), the states of his humiliation and exaltation (27 and 28) and the satisfaction accomplished by Christ as the foundation of redemption and salvation (29). The reason that the Father and the Son were treated in one disputation (8) apparently lies in the fact that the extensive discussion of Christology was reserved for the context of soteriology in the planned structure of the *Synopsis*.

The disputation on the Incarnation and the union of the two natures in Christ (25) stresses that in the incarnation the Son of God humbled himself, taking upon himself in the unity of his person flesh from the virgin Mary, through the Spirit’s activity. In this way the person of Christ, the God-and-man, is constituted, for the purpose of reconciling the elect with God and uniting them to him. The disputation closes with five explicit “antitheses” in which the opinions of the Jews, pseudo-Christians like the Arians, and those who attack the classical understanding of the hypostatic union, such as the Ubiquitarians, are rejected.

In the disputation on the office of Christ (26) Polyander acknowledges that this office—note the singular—has three aspects: prophetic, priestly and royal. In his office, the

Mediator Christ expiated our sins through his obedience on the altar of the cross. The Socinians are accused of holding that satisfaction through the death of Christ is not necessary for our salvation. Polyander closes the discussion of the royal aspect of Christ's office with an eschatological perspective: Christ will hand over all the elect together with his mediatorial scepter to his Father (*spt* 26.53).

Humiliation and Exaltation

Turning to Christ's humiliation (27) and exaltation (28), the *Synopsis* discusses both in three parallel steps: his suffering, crucifixion, and death, his burial, and his descent into hell are related to his resurrection, his ascension, and his session at the Father's right hand in a chiasmic structure. In Christ's separation from God on the cross the Father turned against Christ by withholding his favor from him, not by rejecting him entirely, Rivetus explains, referring to the scholastic distinction between the willing of what is righteous and the willing of what is pleasant (*spt* 27.8). The nuanced discussion of the descent into hell surprisingly ends with explaining this as a reference to the state of death and not to the hellish anguish on the cross, although the alternative interpretation in some public Catechisms should not be rejected (*spt* 27.32).

The disputation on Christ's humiliation contains a clear statement regarding the extent of Christ's atonement. The Gospel indiscriminately proclaims salvation to all to whom it is sent, but only those who believe in Christ partake of that salvation. The value of Christ's suffering and death is sufficient for the redemption of all people, but "the life-giving and saving efficacy of Christ's suffering and death manifests itself only in those who believe, to bestow 7

upon them justifying faith and by means of it to lead them on to their salvation with certainty" (*spt* 27.23).⁷

Although there are quite a few polemical theses in this part of the *Synopsis*, nevertheless the disputations are not dominated by the discussions with Lutherans, Anabaptists, and Socinians, but rather characterized by a positive reference to and exposition of the applicable texts from Scripture. The disputation on the Satisfaction by Jesus Christ (29), for instance, could have been loaded with criticism of the Socinians, but in fact it contains many exegetical remarks, such as the references to texts that show that Christ performed the satisfaction willingly and without any compulsion (*spt* 29.7), and the references to Old Testament sacrifices.

⁷ The distinction between the sufficiency of Christ's passion for the redemption of all people and its efficacy for the believers reflects the *Canons of Dort* ii:2, 8, though there the efficacy is related to election, here to faith.

2.3 *The Effectuation of Redemption*

Turning to the efficacious work of the Holy Spirit in the elect, the *Synopsis* opens with a disputation on the calling to salvation (30).⁸ According to Polyander, in the special calling (*vocatio specialis*) God calls some people to a supernatural knowledge of Christ away from the corruptions of this world through the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit (*spt* 30.5).

The special calling occurs both outwardly through the ministry of the Word and the sacraments and inwardly through the work of the Holy Spirit, although God is free to call some even without the external Word. Whether or not the calling is effective does not depend on the fact whether it is internal, but on the way in which both sides of the calling go together. They can concur either effectively, leading to saving faith, or in an ineffective way as the parable of the sower shows. The calling is only effective in those “in whom the Holy Spirit implants the full assurance or confidence of a living faith that is rooted in Christ” (the seed in the good soil) (*spt* 30.35–38). The efficacious calling is not forced, but “sweet,” because it turns the crooked will in such a way that from unwilling it becomes willing. This resembles the “very powerful yet very sweet, wonderful hidden and unspeakable operation” of which the *Canons of Dort* (iii/iv, 11–12) speak.

Faith and Perseverance

Because the content was so abundant and distinct, the disputation on Faith and Perseverance (31) required a double defense. In both cases the responding student was Paul Testard (c. 1596–1650), a student and admirer of the Saumur theologian John Cameron (c. 1579–1625).⁹ Rivetus attacks Cameron in this disputation for holding that the will necessarily follows the intellect in conversion. This is one of the cases in which the text of the *Synopsis* is in fact more polemical than it appears to be at first glance. Knowledge of contemporary debates is very important for the correct understanding of the specific position taken in the *Synopsis*, especially when the opponents are only mentioned in general or not at all.

Rivetus defines saving faith as “a firm assent—based on the certain knowledge of divine revelation—implanted in our minds by the Holy Spirit through the Word of the Gospel, an assent to everything that God has revealed to us in his Word, and especially to the promises of life that were made in Christ” (*spt* 31.6). It is only by this faith that believers rely on God. This justifying faith is to be distinguished from historical faith, which still is always connected to it, from temporary faith, and from faith in miracles.

Regarding the assurance of salvation, Rivetus holds that believers should “be certain that their own sins have been forgiven and that they have been reconciled through Christ” (*spt* 31.20). To attain this certainty it is not necessary that salvation is declared to us personally,

⁸ For a comparison of this disputation with previous and later Leiden disputations on the issue see Henk van den Belt, “The Vocatio in the Leiden Disputations (1597–1631): The Influence of the Arminian Controversy on the Concept of the Divine Call to Salvation,” *Church History and Religious Culture*, 92.4 (2012), 539–559.

⁹ The original disputation is dated July 13 and 16, 1622; for a picture of the frontispiece see the cover of this volume.

because believers can conclude that their sins are forgiven from the general promise of forgiveness to all who believe in Christ, and from the fact that they believe. This is the so-called practical syllogism. From the promise of the Gospel (the major) and the selfconsciousness regarding personal faith, 'I believe' (the minor), believers can conclude that the promise is true for them in particular. The certainty of the minor was disputed by Roman Catholic opponents, but according to Rivetus, the affirmation "I believe" is from the Holy Spirit, who witnesses to the spirit of believers that they are children of God.

Rivetius defines perseverance as "the continuous, perpetual progress and successful endurance of true believers, through the grace and justifying faith once received, right unto the end of life, thanks to the gracious will according to God's eternal plan of election" (*spt* 31.33). It is bestowed on them without any merit from their side by the power of the Spirit through the Gospel.

9

Repentance

In the disputation on repentance (32) Walaeus distinguishes between repentance in the broad sense including regeneration—a disposition (*habitus*) poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit—and repentance in the strict sense of a human act of sorrow for sin that flows from that disposition. The answer to the question whether faith is part of repentance depends on the definition. In the broad sense it is, for then repentance denotes the whole set of changes worked by the Holy Spirit; but taken in the strict sense, faith is the cause and repentance the effect.

After having explained regeneration as a renewal of the whole human soul, "with all its faculties, including intellect, will and affections" (*spt* 32.18), Walaeus turns to penitence, or active repentance, not only warning against the Roman Catholic misunderstanding that repentance is meritorious, but also taking issue with the Anabaptist disciplinary practice that excludes public sinners from the communion of the church during their repentance.

2.4 *Justification and Sanctification*

The *Synopsis* divides the efficacious work or saving of God in the believers into God's calling together with the human response in faith and repentance on the one hand and the effects of that calling and response in justification and sanctification on the other hand. Sanctification is dealt with in six disputations: on good works, on Christian liberty, on the practices of prayer, almsgiving and fasting, and vows, ending with an explicitly anti-Roman Catholic disputation on purgatory and indulgences.

The disputation on justification (33) defines it as "the judgment of God whereby He pronounces righteous the person who is unholy and of himself a sinner subject to God's wrath" (*spt* 33.7). According to Thysius we are justified by the Father as judge seated on a throne of grace, in Christ who has made satisfaction and acts as our advocate and through the Holy Spirit who grants faith and seals grace in our hearts by the Gospel (*spt* 33.37).

This disputation by Thysius also includes explicit antitheses, primarily against Roman Catholic theologians who reject a forensic understanding of justification, interpreting the term as a reference to the infusion of the quality of righteousness. According to Thysius the principal cause of justification, however, is not an infused habit of love, but the imputation of the merit and satisfaction of Christ and consequently the participation of the believer in Christ's righteousness through faith.

Good Works

Good works (34), according to Polyander, are "the actions of regenerate people that come about according to the precept of God's Law, out of faith that works through love, for the confirmation of our election and calling, for the upbuilding of our neighbor, and to the glory of God" (*spt* 34.2). That God is their primary efficient cause does not exclude those who are renewed by the Holy Spirit as secondary causes. Good works have three goals: the confirmation of our election and calling, the upbuilding of our neighbor, and the glory of God, to which goal the other two are subordinate.

Good works render the election and calling unto salvation of the believers more certain. In other words, they confirm the minor of the practical syllogism, explained in the disputation on faith as the core of assurance. If you want to know for sure if you believe, faith is confirmed by its fruits.

Liberty

The topic of Christian Freedom (35)—"the condition of people who have been set free by the grace of Christ, a condition whereby their consciences have been released from slavery to sin, the tyranny of the devil, and from the precise demands and curse of the moral law, and from observing the ceremonial law" (*spt* 35.7)—is interesting for Reformed biblical hermeneutics, because it presupposes the distinction between the moral and the ceremonial parts of the Law. According to Rivetus, the juridical or political parts of the Mosaic Law that are sanctioned by the universal principles of nature and common sense, remain permanently.

Most of the disputations in the *Synopsis* are structured along the lines of the four different causes (*causae*): the efficient cause, the formal cause or "form," the material cause or "matter," and the final cause or goal. This scheme originated from Aristotelian philosophy and was adapted to theology in medieval scholasticism, though it was emptied of its original ontological connotations.¹⁰ The efficient cause and the final cause of all things are always identified as God—except, of course, for evil, which in fact is a 'no-thing,' a non-entity, because it does not have an independent substance. In order to be able to discern

¹⁰ Cf. Te Velde, *spt* vol. 1, "Introduction," 5.

subordinate human causes as well, often an instrumental cause is subjoined to God as the ultimate efficient cause.

Disputation 35 suffices as an illustration of the ‘causal’ structure of the disputations:

11

- 1) Introduction and place of the disputation in the series. 2) Importance of the doctrine.
- 3–6) The nature and different forms of slavery and freedom.
- 7) Definition of Christian freedom.
- 8) The chief *efficient cause*: God.
- 9) Two aspects of the efficient *instrumental cause*: the Gospel and a living faith.
- 10) The *material cause* or the matter of Christian freedom (on the side of the subject): everyone who believes in Christ.
- 11–17) The matter (or the side of the object) is manifold: a) sin and guilt, b) the moral law, c) human traditions.
- 18–19) Christian Liberty is spiritual and does not apply to politics.
- 20) Christian Freedom under the New Testament.
- 21–27) Freedom from the ceremonial law.
- 28–31) Freedom from the judicial laws of Moses.
- 32–40) Things that are indifferent.
- 41) The *formal cause* or form of Christian liberty.
- 42) Christian liberty’s *final cause*: the proximate goal in the tranquility of conscience and the ultimate goal in the praise of God’s grace.
- 43–44) The freedom of glory.
- 45–47) Manifold use of the doctrine.
- 48) Polemical statement against ‘Jewish’ chiliasm.
- 49) Polemical statement against Roman Catholics and Socinians.

The disputation mainly deals with the ceremonial laws and the *adiaphora*— covering almost 30 of the 49 theses—but in the structure of the four causes, this all belongs to the matter of the Christian freedom, introduced in thesis 10. Christian liberty is the essence of the full assurance (*plērophoria*) of a conscience that knows that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Prayer, Almsgiving and Fasting

With respect to prayer (36) Walaeus claims that Roman Catholics pray to angels and dead saints, contrary to all God’s commandments. Repentance, humility, filial fear of God, true faith, and a true desire are necessary aspects of prayer. Public prayers should be audible—contrary to some Anabaptists who prayed silently in worship services—and in a language

that can be understood— contrary to the Latin liturgy of Roman Catholics. Needless repetition of words is prohibited.

Almsgiving and fasting (37) and vows (38) are other aspects of the Christian life. The *Synopsis* relates the three topics to prayer. Almsgiving is an act of charity towards one's neighbor from one's own goods and in proportion to one's financial resources and should proceed out of true faith and burning love for God and for one's neighbor in the hope of obtaining a divine reward (*spt* 37.3).

Fasting is a prescription for Christians, but in its circumstances it is voluntary. In fasting they abstain "from all food and drink, and all the customary trappings of life [...] at least for a day, in order to arouse and assist the soul and spirit in prayer" (*spt* 37.39). It should be done religiously in humility before God with repentance for sin.

Vows

A vow, according to Polyander, is a voluntary promise made to God "of our own doing, and by faith, for the glory of his name and the upbuilding of our neighbor" (*spt* 38.3). The discussion of vows is closely linked to disputation 20 on oaths, because vows are oaths about future things. More remarkable even is a minor difference of opinion within the *Synopsis* with respect to vows, the subject Polyander deals with in disputation 38. Because vows belong to the promissory category of oaths, they already had been discussed by Walaeus in disputation 20 in the context of explaining the third commandment. There Walaeus discerns a special difficulty with respect to uttering vows about intermediate matters. If these matters are left explicitly to human freedom in Scripture, one is not allowed to vow to abstain from them permanently.

Polyander in disputation 38 seems to be less explicit on this issue, only claiming that vows on *adiaphora*—such as celibacy and abstaining from certain food and drink—are to be condemned if they conflict with the freedom that Christ has obtained for us (*spt* 38.37). Vows regarding indifferent things are allowed if they are uttered in the right attitude, free of superstition, and with the right aims.

The difference between the two disputations should not, however, be exaggerated, because also Walaeus allowed for vows uttered with respect to the *adiaphora*. They are permitted as long as they are meant to avoid becoming a stumbling-block for others or licentiousness for our own flesh. "But daring to do this in a different way or for a different purpose is a superstition that Christians ought to shun" (*spt* 20.45).

Purgatory and Indulgences

The disputation about purgatory and indulgences (39) has a special character. Whereas almost all disputations contain polemical theses, this one is completely dedicated to the rejection of a Roman Catholic doctrine and practice. Rivetus calls it an "elenctic disputation" and connects it to the discussion of the 13

efficacy of Christ's satisfaction in justification and the works of sanctification, especially because purgatory contradicts the unique and complete satisfaction of Christ.

He trusts that "once the fire of purgatory has been extinguished, the smoke of indulgences vanishes by itself" (*spt* 39.37). Obviously this disputation is not structured along the lines of the four 'causes' or aspects, because it does not discuss something that is seen as part of reality. The disputation ends with a reference to the Reformation, thanking God that He "raised up Martin Luther" (*spt* 39.54).

2.5 *Ecclesiology*(40–42)

The last three disputations in this volume partly deal with Reformed ecclesiology. In his discussion of the church (40), Walaeus defines the 'Ecclesia' etymologically as "the meeting of those whom God in his grace calls out from the state of nature into the supernatural state of children of God, in order to show his glorious mercy" (*spt* 40.3). Thus he connects the doctrine of the church with the first aspect of the effectuation of redemption in the believers: the divine calling unto salvation.

According to Walaeus the invisible Church is the multitude of elect believers of which the inner form (consisting of true faith and holiness) is not seen by human eyes, by mortal people. The visible church is "the gathering of those who through the outward Word, the use of the sacraments and church discipline, are formed together into one outward body and fellowship" (*spt* 40.32).

A church simply errs when it fosters false teachings that do not ruin the foundation of the faith, but it is heretical when it errs in fundamental articles and persists in error and schismatic behavior when it unnecessarily breaks the communion because of outward rites or moral failings. Christians are not allowed to join a church that is heretical or schismatic. The marks of the pure and visible Church are "the pure preaching, and reception, of the Word, sealed by the lawful use of the sacraments, and upheld by the true use of the keys (or church discipline), according to the institution by Christ" (*spt* 40.45).

Antichrist

Turning to Christ as Head of the Church, and the Antichrist (41), Thysius denies that the bishop of Rome has authority over the Church and claims that Christ is her only Sovereign and that he is the Head from which—according to the understandings of early modern anatomy—life flows down into the body. This sovereignty "also exists in his governance and control over it by the Spirit through his Word, and that not only by internal administration but also by the external one, which is in the calling and sending forth of ministers, and in their instruction through his Word" (*spt* 41.15), anticipating the following disputation.

In the following disputation Polyander summarizes the Reformed view of the calling and duties of those who minister to the Church (42). This calling "is made known not only by the Holy Spirit's prior inward prompting and inspiration, but also by the subsequent outward

approval of the genuine members of the Church" (*spt* 42.4). Whereas most disputations end with some quotations—mostly from church fathers—as a corollary,¹¹ this disputation adds a few questions and answers on specific issues, such as the question how Christ handed the key of David down to Peter, with the reply that Christ still holds the key as Lord of the Church but that Peter received it from him as a faithful steward.

3 Sources

Compared to other disputations at the beginning of the seventeenth century, those of the *Synopsis* cycle still refer frequently to the sources of theological allies or opponents, although the four authors write their disputations in various styles and do not all give equally extensive references.

The most important source of the *Synopsis* is Scripture. The genre of the academic disputation is not very well suited for extensive exegetical remarks, but that does not mean that the method is one of mere prooftexting. The authors of the *Synopsis* were interested in correct biblical exegesis.

Rivetius, for instance, taught Old Testament, wrote commentaries on Exodus and on the Psalms.¹² Walaeus was involved in the translation and annotation of the New Testament for the Dutch translation of the Bible, the *Statenvertaling*. In the disputation on Christ's incarnation, Thysius, for example, argues that the human nature of Christ had "accidental properties which can be separated from it and which can be altered or even removed altogether." This is a scholastic expression of the development and growth of Christ according to his human nature. Thysius refers to Isaiah 7:16, where the prophet says that the Messiah as a boy will not know enough to reject the wrong and choose the right and to Luke 2:40, where the evangelist says that the child grew, became strong, and was filled with wisdom (*spt* 25.13).

Sometimes the disputations refer to the apocrypha, for instance to Jesus Sirach (*spt* 34.42). Polyander, however, adds the warning that the book is not a self-authenticating witness. 1Maccabees (2:58) is said to confirm Elijah's ascension to heaven (2Kings 2:11), but the editors of the 1642 edition of the *Synopsis* (*spt* 40.15) add that "the accepted interpretation of the

¹¹ Corollaries are loosely added to the argument of the disputation; the suggestion in volume 1 (*Synopsis* 1:149, note 15) that they were added to the main text of the disputations after the oral defense is not substantiated by the original pamphlets, in which the corollaries seem to be a padding of empty pages.

¹² Andreas Rivetius, *Commentarii in librum secundum Mosis* (Leiden: Franciscus Hegerus, 1634) and Andreas Rivetius, *Commentarius in Psalmorum propheticonum, de mysteriis evangelicis, dodecadem selectam* (Rotterdam: Arnoldus Leers, 1645).

Jews confirms it (1Maccabees 2:58).” In some cases a reference to an apocryphal book might have been part of a list of common references, for instance when Thysius mentions among the ritual actions to indicate grief during fasting “pulling out one’s hair and beard” with a reference to Esther 14:2, an apocryphal part of Esther, where the Septuagint says that Esther filled all the places of her joy with her torn hair (*spt* 37.53).

Among the church fathers Augustine is most favorite, but Cyprian, for instance, is also mentioned a few times, especially in the context of ecclesiology and the offices in the church. Most of the explicit references to church fathers occur in the disputations defended under Rivetus who was the author of a patristic manual which became a Protestant classic.¹³ Further study of this subject might offer some insights into the way in which the tradition of the early Church was appealed to next to Scripture, especially in polemical debates with Roman Catholic theologians.

Contemporary Opponents and Allies

Contemporary authors are referred to explicitly when the Leiden professors disagree with them and want to refute their errors. Therefore the polemical parts of the disputations and the elenctic disputation on purgatory and indulgences contain more references to contemporary authors than the other parts of the *Synopsis*. Among the Roman Catholic authors Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) and Gregory of Valencia (c. 1550–1603) are noteworthy opponents. Fausto Sozzini (1539–1604) is also mentioned—sometimes with a pun on his name called “the miscreant (*infaustus*) Socinus”—along with some of his disciples and the Racovian Catechism (1605). Careful comparison with the original texts of Roman Catholic or Socinian authors might reveal that they are sometimes quoted eclectically, as is the case in many polemical debates.

Reformers and contemporary Protestant theologians often are not referred to explicitly. They are allies who are either silently copied or just mentioned in general because of holding a differing opinion. Thus in the disputation “On Christian Freedom” (35) Rivetus claims that the importance of the doctrine is such “that if we do not keep it then we will not be able to

¹³ Andreas Rivetus, *Critici Sacri Libri iv. In quibus expenduntur, confirmantur, defenduntur, vel reiiciuntur censurae doctorum tam ex orthodoxis quam ex pontificiis, in scripta quae patribus plerisque priscorum et posteriorum et puriorum saeculorum incogitantia vel error afinxit aut dolus malus supposuit. Praefixus est tractatus de patrum autoritate, errorum causis et nothorum notis*, 4th edition (Geneva: Jacobus Chouet, 1642). It was first published in or around 1612 and went through several editions. According to Irena Backus it is a “moderate and reasoned call for a critical and historical assessment of the church fathers before one appeals to their authority in works of Biblical exegesis or controversy.” See Irena Backus, “The Bible and the Fathers according to Abraham Scultetus (1566–1624) and André Rivet (1571/73–1651). The case of Basil of Caesarea,” in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West. From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irena Backus (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2:839–865.

rightly know Christ, the true Gospel, nor inward peace in our souls" (*spt* 35.2), a verbatim quotation from John Calvin's *Institutes* (3.19.1).¹⁴

Arguments used against opponents, however, were also often copied from similar sources, some of them gaining the status of polemical common places. The elenctic disputation "On Purgatory and Indulgences" (39) contains many references and expressions that are similar to those of Johann Gerhard's discussion of purgatory in his series *Loci theologici*, first published in 1621.¹⁵ In general it is difficult to decide whether the text of a disputation depends on an earlier polemical work from the Protestant side, or whether both texts depend on the same earlier work as a source. In this case the conclusion that Rivetus was silently using Gerhard's much more extensive text is hardly avoidable.

Further Research

Study of the sources of the *Synopsis* or comparisons of its disputations with contemporary texts of the same genre may prove to be promising avenues for further research. Just like the cycles of disputations prior to the Synod of Dort, the *Synopsis* series was repeated four times up to 1639. The most important difference between these repetitions and the cycles prior to the Synod of Dort is that the list of subjects remained fixed. This fact alone testifies to the influence of the *Synopsis* as a textbook on later theological instruction at Leiden. For 17

the development of Reformed theology studies on the influence and reception of the *Synopsis* may be very promising, too, as is illustrated by the recent study of Rinse Reeling Brouwer on Karl Barth's reception of the *Synopsis* in his view of the doctrines of Scripture, the Trinity, providence, predestination and incarnation.¹⁶

4 Features of the Edition

An introduction to the Latin text has been offered in the first volume. Therefore, in this volume a few remarks will suffice. The current edition takes as its starting point the text of the 1625 edition, though for the sake of consistency and readability, this text has been adapted slightly in aspects of orthography and punctuation. The primary aim is to present a text that is most accessible to the present-day reader. A careful comparison of variants in

¹⁴ For a more precise comparison with Calvin see Henk van den Belt, "Spiritual and Bodily Freedom: Christian Liberty in Early Modern Reformed Theology," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 9 (2015): 148–165.

¹⁵ Johann Gerhard, *Loci theologici* (Jena: Steinmann, 1610–1625), chapter 26. Cf. Johann Gerhard, *Loci theologici* (Berlin: Schlawitz, 1863–1870), 8:132–226.

¹⁶ Rinse H. Reeling Brouwer, *Karl Barth and Post-Reformation Orthodoxy* (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 75–106.

the texts of the original pamphlets and the five seventeenth-century editions has yielded a very small number of significant textual variants, and these have been noted.

Original printer's errors are corrected without mention, including references to the Bible which in the 1625 edition were incorrect. In some cases the differences between the first edition and later ones are given in a footnote. In light of the authors' desire to base their theology on Scripture, it is surprising that Scripture is not always referred to very accurately. The original disputations contain many errors that are mostly copied in the printed editions of the *Synopsis*; apparently the authors and printers did not take time to check them before reprinting the material. Most of these errors have been silently corrected in this edition, but in those cases in which it was difficult to make sense of the original intention, a footnote has been added to explain this.

The seventeenth century editions of the *Synopsis* are inconsistent in giving titles of books and names of ancient and contemporary authors. The current edition follows the modern practice of giving the names of authors in Roman letters, and book titles in italics. Exact quotations are referenced in the footnotes to the Latin text, and point to current scholarly editions. In almost all cases the references to church fathers and opponents could be traced either to critical editions or to seventeenth century publications

A comparison with the texts of the disputations in the *Opera omnia* of Walaeus and Rivetus shows that these texts simply copy the text from the *Synopsis*. In two cases, however, a comparison with the *Opera omnia* of Walaeus was helpful, because the subjects of predestination and repentance are dealt with more extensively in his *Loci communes*, published in his *Opera*.¹⁷

Translation

The accompanying English translation intends to make the text of the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* accessible to readers who have received little or no training in the Latin language, and also to convey the scholastic argument in the original text through a close rendering of the concepts, ideas, and modes of thought. The aim is to produce a translation that is as close to the original text as possible and as free as is necessary for a smooth reading in English. Whenever possible, we have sought to preserve the language, tone, and sentence structure employed by each of the four writers. At the same time, as it was also the intent of the writers, we have sought to preserve the sense of overall unity through the consistent rendering of recurring terms and modes of expression.

¹⁷ For the chapter "De Aeterna Praedestinatione" see Antonius Walaeus, *Opera omnia*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, 1643), 1:319–374 and for the chapter "De Resipiscentia" see *Opera* 1:431–444.

As the text of the *Synopsis* may not be immediately accessible to the presentday reader, the religious, cultural, and socio-political contexts in which it originated are reflected in numerous references and annotations.

The footnotes also provide the literary sources to which the authors of the *Synopsis* allude, and historical information about persons and events mentioned in the text. A very short biographical sketch is offered when persons are mentioned for the first time. Information on persons already mentioned in Volume 1 may be traced via the index of that volume.

The footnotes also explain the structure of complicated arguments, and give cross-references to other theses. Moreover, they define and explain concepts, distinctions, and specific arguments. Lastly, they analyze and interpret doctrinal positions, especially when these might be misunderstood in light of later discussions of them.

The Glossary contains a list of key terms and distinctions used in these disputations and is largely identical with the Glossary which was compiled for the first volume, although a few new terms have been added to it for this volume. In some cases all of the occurrences have been marked with an asterisk in both the Latin and the English text. In other cases, especially when the terms are used more often, not all of the occurrences have been marked; subsequent occurrences within the thesis have generally not been marked with an asterisk, except when the term is translated or used in different ways. Since the Glossary is based on the Latin terms, the reader is enabled thus to compare the English rendering with the Latin original.

The current volume offers students of early Reformed Orthodoxy an annotated text of one of the influential surveys of Reformed soteriology in the *Synopsis* disputations ranging from the doctrines of grace to the calling and duties of the pastors. In sum, this volume traces biblical doctrines from predestination to preaching, and illustrates effectively the practical goal of theological reflection in the *Synopsis of a Purer Theology*.